ROBS - RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

Since 1991 Still Serving Issue 1/2016 January, February, March 2016

MEETINGS

General Meetings are held at the Brentwood Public Library. 2nd Avenue and Third Street at 10:00 a.m. on the **first** Friday of the month unless otherwise noted.

February - no meeting

March 4 - Book Signing
Letty Sustrin

April 1 - to be announced

May 6- Election of Officers
Video Presentation

June 3 - Luncheon is tba

ROBS CARES
CONTRIBUTIONS
NEEDED

Pronto, the community action group we support, is in need of dry and canned goods, paper products and toiletries. **Please** bring your contributions to **every** meeting. Thank you.

New and/or **gently** used children's books collected for the **Books to Home Program** at every meeting.

OFFICERS

Nick Siciliano - President
kpnic1@aol.com
Kathy Guleksen - 1st VP
Harriet Pepine - 2nd VP
Nancy Churchillo - Secretary
Carmen Roldan - Treasurer
Phyllis Goodwin - President Emerita
Dot Zuckerman - Founder

AFFILIATIONS

ROBS is proudly affiliated with **NYSUT, AFT, NEA, AFL-CIO, RC21 & NYSARA.**

www.robsny.org

SENIOR ALERT!

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PROPOSES DIMINISHED HEALTH CARE BENEFITS FOR SENIORS

Governor Cuomo's 2016-17 Executive Budget proposes language that, if adopted, would constitute a diminishment of established health care benefits. The proposed change would affect not only state retirees for whom Medicare is their primary insurance, but also harm some school district and local government retirees.

The Governor's budget language introduces two proposals impacting retirees enrolled in the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP) as well as retirees receiving Medicare reimbursements through their former school districts enrolled in the NYSHIP program. Brentwood retirees receive such reimbursement quarterly.

He proposes to freeze the reimbursement rate of Medicare Part B to $104.90 for those enrolled in NYSHIP. The Governor's plan would also eliminate the reimbursement of the Medicare Part B Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA) surcharge paid by higher income retirees.

The changes would affect all state retirees for whom Medicare is their primary insurance as well as retirees with Medicare from school districts and municipalities enrolled in the NYSHIP Empire Plan for health insurance. This means everyone who receives either a pension from the Teachers Retirement System or Employees Retirement System. The only retirees not affected are those who are not enrolled in NYSHIP.

The Executive Budget proposal, if enacted, would amend Section 167-A of the Civil Service Law.

We need immediate action. Use the toll free phone number for the NYS AFL-CIO Capitol Switchboard Hotline (877) 255-9417. Follow the operator's instructions to speak with your State Senator and Assembly representative. Once connected to your representative's office, **demand** they have the Governor's 2016-2017 Executive Budget Medicare Part B reimbursement language **removed from the bill.** Then ask them to vote to maintain the current Medicare reimbursement language.

The information for this article was from an email sent from Floyd Cameron of NYSUT. He has promised to keep us updated on the Governor's and legislature's future action on this topic.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

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Marge Kirchner - Advisor
Barbara Mascaro-Archivist and RC 21 Liaison
Paula Moore-Photographer
John Sherin-History Project
Nick Siciliano-Web Editor
Letty Sustrin-Project Hope
Ellen Edelstein, Jim Nanos and Valerie Vismale-Delegates at Large
To Be Announced - Hospitality & Programs

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tecnoquuen@aol.com
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Lucille Fink
Phyllis Goodwin
Paula Moore
John Sherin
Nick Siciliano

TALK TO US

The phone numbers, home addresses, and e-mail addresses of all the Officers and Executive Board Members are in the Directory should you wish to contact us.

Stories, ideas for stories or columns and news items are always welcome.

This newsletter **is** all about **us.**

www.robsny.org

NICK'S NOTES by Nick Siciliano

GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

As we enter another New Year I would like to thank all of you again for your support in making **ROBS** the retiree organization it is.

As you are aware, we are more than a social organization but one that keeps you informed on issues pertaining to retirees such as the article on page 1 of this issue. We have done this since our founding, giving back to the Brentwood community each year. Every year we ask you to donate to our **Project Hope** to provide needy families with Thanksgiving dinner and gifts for the holidays.

The second way we give back is to provide scholarships to our Brentwood graduates. We are now in the process of choosing students to receive those scholarships. We again ask you to make a donation in any amount so we may be able to choose three or more students. Please send your donations to me at 39 Jeremy Circle, Nesconset, NY 11769, and make the check out to **ROBS.** On the memo line indicate "scholarship fund".

So, throughout the year **ROBS** has consistently given back to the community in either our scholarship program, holiday dinners, gifts and food for **PRONTO.** It is through your generosity that we are able to do this.

A special thanks is to be given to the members who help in carrying out these programs. It is because of your dedication and generosity that we are able to make a success of these efforts.

In September we will be celebrating our 25th anniversary as an organization. If you have ideas for programs or events, please let me know.

MAH JONGG

by: Ronda Brooks

Mah Jongg is a tile game that originated in China in approximately the 1800's. In the 1920's it was imported to the United States where it has been gaining in popularity. There are various forms of Mah Jongg played all over the world. The most common form in the States is based on rules created by the National Mah Jongg League in 1937.

The name Mah Jongg means sparrow and might have originated from the pleasant clicking or chirping sound of the tiles being mixed together between hands.

The US game is played with 152 tiles consisting of various suits such as Craks, Bams and Dots as well as Winds, Dragons, Flowers and the highly coveted Jokers. It is probably most similar to the card games of Gin Rummy or 500 Rummy.

Though Mah Jongg's popularity started out in the US mostly among Jewish women, its appeal has now spread across people of all ages, races, nationalities and religions, including men.

I have been playing Mah Jongg for about 23 years. A group of friends taught me to play, and I've been an avid player ever since. I played in a weekly game for many years, and since retirement, I've been playing twice a week. I have friends who play at least five times a week!

It's not just the game that draws people in. It's the camaraderie, the food, the gossip, the fun and the excitement. Somehow the feel of the tiles is much more substantial and satisfying than a deck of cards. The sounds of mixing the tiles evokes evenings of growing up in the Bronx and hearing my mother and her friends shuffling tiles and laughing.

Sometimes I attend Mah Jongg tournaments. These can be all-day or weekend long events. It was quite nerve-wracking when I started playing in tournaments, but now it's fun as well as competitive.

For the past seven years or so, a group of friends and I have been running Mah Jongg Tournaments/Fundraisers at our synagogue. These events occur four or five times a year and have been very lucrative. Our most successful tournament took place in November, 2015. We had 120 players, and a good time was had by all. I currently maintain an email list of over 800 names. Our players come from all over Long Island as well as New York City and even New Jersey.

If you are interested in learning how to play Mah Jongg, there are many adult ed courses available. There are books and websites that cover the topic too. I think the best way to learn is to join a group of friends or acquaintances who already play and learn from them.

If you are an experienced player and interested in playing in a tournament, feel free to contact me at **gumby5@optonline.net** for more information.

Have fun and may the tiles be with you!

MUSIC FILLS THE AIR

by Debbi Warsaw-Curley

And so it was on October 2, 2015 at the Brentwood Public Library when about fifty of our members were entertained by the Long Island Classic Jazz Ensemble.

Our own John Sherin and four members of this ensemble performed about twenty songs from the 1930's through today.

The concert started off with a 1939 tune "I've Got The World On A String". Other songs were "Tangerine", "P.S. I Love You", "If I Only Had A Brain" from the Wizard of Oz, "When You're Smiling", "You Make Me Feel So Young", "L.O.V.E", and "Imagine". The most contemporary song performed was "All About That Bass" that had us singing along with the group.

The band also had everyone singing along to "Sing". We bopped to and sang along to "Rock Around the Clock", "Johnny B Goode", and "Wipe Out". That medley had an awesome guitar and drum solo.

The last song was "God Bless America".

The Jazz Ensemble was given a well earned standing ovation, and a good time was had by all.

The Long Island Classic Jazz Ensemble consists of: Jim Ilardi, piano and keyboard; Tom Pandelakis, guitar and vocal; Bob Lilic, percussion and vocal; Sal Richards, percussion and vocals; and John Sherin, bass and vocals.

ROBS HOLIDAY DRIVE

2015

by Letty Sustrin

I'd like to thank everyone who donated to the **ROBS** 2015 Holiday Drive. We were able to raise over $2300 and provide gifts and food to three families, totaling twenty-one adults and children.

A big thank-you to all the "elves" who helped shop, wrap and deliver the gifts. A special thank you to the Brentwood Library for allowing us to have the "wrap party" there and for providing goodies for the volunteers.

We received a thank-you letter from Suburban Housing Development and Research, Inc., the group we donate to. It reads:

> Thank you so much for your very generous donation of toys and clothes for our families. Suburban Housing is so grateful to all of you.
>
> Year after year we are blessed with your support. The gifts you send are always beautifully wrapped and labeled clearly, making my job so easy.
>
> Please know your gifts went to very needy families who appreciate your generosity and thoughtfulness. May you have a healthy and happy new year.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Michele Beecher
> Education Liaison

IT'S ALL ABOUT US by Carmela Criscione

Happy New Year to all! Our year ended with a lovely Holiday Luncheon at the San Marco Restaurant and started with a great breakfast at the Candlelight Diner. **Lynda Romano** organized both events and everyone enjoyed them greatly. Lynda is stepping down from her role as our Hospitality and Programs planner. We thank her for all her efforts in the past and wish her well for the future.

Thanks to **Maria Canale** for donating a scrumptious pineapple Italian cheesecake for our November meeting. **Don Kubiscko** was the lucky person who won the drawing. Anyone who has tasted one of Maria's cakes can attest to them being delicious.

Unfortunately there is lots of bad news to share with everyone. **Maxine Berlin** lost her husband, Arnold, in August. The parents of **Melanie Schlumpf** were killed in an automobile accident in Florida in late December. **Adrienne Eastman's** sister-in-law, Linda, passed away in October. **Loretta Ellington** recently lost her brother. **Ruth Teich (Elem/NE)** lost her daughter, Honey in late December.

Vito Proia (Art/NJHS) passed away in June. **Tony DeMarco** (Math/HS) died in November as did **Mary Kay Dillon** (Elem) . **Eileen Kelly, Lilian Kelly's** daughter died in a fall in her home in early December. She was still working. We also lost **Lynn Prass** (School Nurse Teacher at North MS) and **Esther Stein** (Attendance Aide for over 30 years in various buildings).

Get well wishes to **Judi Weissman** recovering from back surgery, **Jim Nanos** recovering from hip surgery and **Paula Moore** recuperating from pneumonia.

Bob and Roz Rosenblatt are celebrating their 70th anniversary. Congratulations! What is your secret?

Ellen Edelstein, President of the Brentwood Historical Society, tells us that Santa and Senator Phil Boyle were very generous in providing a $50,000 matching grant for the emergency stabilization of the Modern Times schoolhouse. She is also looking into other sources of funding and the Historical Society is hopeful that the school house will be restored in the not so distant future.

Ken Gaherty was visiting family recently and enjoyed lunch with two of his former students Claudette Rokosz and Kelly McDonough (North JHS 1977). He is planning lunch with two student teachers, now Brentwood teachers, Tara Luce and Katie Mitchell.

John Sherin was able to get a donation of 20 boxes of children's books from the Jericho Public Library. Paula Moore was able to get the District to pick up the boxes at the NYSUT Office and get them delivered to Paula Ribiero for the Book to Home Project. Please remember to bring donations to **ROBS** meetings. This will provide children with books to enjoy over the summer. Thank you John!

Peter Vercillo tells us that one of his former students, Casey Acosta, started a Facebook site for kids who were in the Brentwood Schools. In little time it had 10,000 responses! The kids all share Brentwood topics and query about favorite teachers. As Peter says, "The kids in Brentwood were always terrific!"

Two of **Grace Fishenfeld's** former students wrote to say how much they owe their success to her love and guidance. John Fontana is the creative director of Doubleday at Penguin Random House and a graduate of SVA. Scott Bacal is also a graduate of School of Visual Arts. He is a member of the American Society of Illustrators. Another example that they never forget.

Dot Zuckerman was honored at the RC21 Conference in November as a founding member of RC21.

MRS. BELLE IS BACK!

by Letty Sustrin

I co-authored five books in "The Teacher Who Would Not Retire" series, with my twin sister, Sheila. I invite you to the **ROBS** meeting Friday, March 4, 2016, when I will be reading/signing the latest in the series, "The Teacher Who Would Not Retire Loses Her Ballet Slippers".

Each attendee will receive a Mrs. Belle bookmark and pencil. There will also be a drawing for one copy of the book. All books in the series will be available for purchase. They normally sell from $16 to $18 each, but for ROBS members they will be discounted to $12 each.

Looking forward to seeing you!

ROBS SCHOLARSHIPS

Our Scholarship Committee will shortly be reviewing letters and applications from Brentwood High School's graduating seniors.

ROBS has been committed from its very beginning to fostering the educational goals of Brentwood students pursuing careers in education.

We will be accepting contributions at all our meetings, or a check can be sent directly to our president, Nick Siciliano, 39 Jeremy Circle, Nesconset, NY 11769.

Checks should be made out to **ROBS** with "scholarship fund" on the memo line.

In the past, our members have been very generous. There is great need. Now more than ever we need motivated young people entering the teacher rolls.

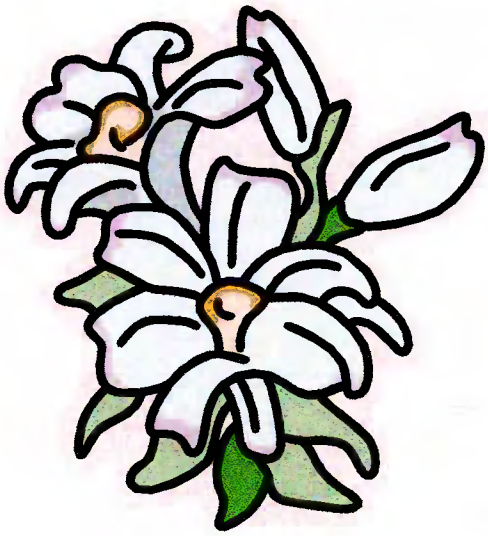
As always, thank you for your generous support.

IN MEMORIAM

BECAUSE WE CARE

We wish our words could somehow
ease your sadness,
but in our hearts, we know
the most they can do is simply
tell you how much we care.

To everyone who lost someone dear to them in
2015 our sincere sympathies.
Please know that our thoughts are
with you.



2015

February
Joel Ratner - Music Coord. still in service
Mary Jo Gallo - Art
George Catandella - Music Coord.

March
Ronald Albaum - Physical Education

May
Stella Finan - English

June
Vito Proia - Art

August
Marabeth Criscione - Elementary Sub Caller

September
Marie Cohen - Secretary

October
Sheila Sustrin - Elementary/Author
Doug Walters - Health, Psychology, Social Work Coordinator
while still in service

November
Tony DeMarco - Math
Mary Kay Dillon - Elementary

December
Eileen Kelly - while still in service

REMEMBERING SHEILA SUSTRIN

A FOND MEMORY

by Harriet Pepine

We lost Sheila on Oct 5, 2015, after a lengthy illness.

This did not stop her from attending **ROBS** meetings regularly with her twin, Letty. She helped in many of our activities. One of these included taking charge of the shopping for Project Hope families. Both sisters had great shopping acumen and were able to stretch a donated **ROBS** dollar to its maximum extent.

Together, Sheila and Letty wrote and published a series of beautiful children's books. Many of them were launched at ROBS meetings with the twins reading the text and pointing to the lovely illustrations in the books.

I will always remember Sheila for her warm smile and friendship.

WHERE DOES ONE BEGIN?

by Maria Canale

Many people leave this earth and hardly anyone even notices that they are gone.

NOT SO when it comes to Sheila. It has often been said, by those who know, that Sheila and Letty could teach a monkey how to read.

Had she had more time, that might have been her next successful career.

Her talents as a teacher and accomplished author are admired by all who were fortunate enough to have known her.

Her legacy will go on and on for many years and then some.

She surely left her mark on all of us.

Until we meet again, rest in peace dear friend.

ONE LITTLE GIRL'S EXCITEMENT AT THE BOOK LAUNCH

by Carmela Criscione

That little girl was my 4 year old great-niece, Averyanna. Over the years (even before she was born) I had gotten all of "The Teacher Who Would Not Retire" books for her. Sheila and Letty were kind enough to autograph them.

Now there was going to be a book launch in November of 2014 at the Bolton Center for "The Teacher Who Would Not Retire Loses Her Ballet Slippers", and we were going to attend. Avy had two long stemmed red roses to present to her favorite authors. Letty and Sheila were very sweet to her.

In the auditorium we had good seats but Avy stood up in hers, not wanting to miss a word. After a couple of tries she learned the "Mrs. Belle" chant and recited it dutifully.

It was a big day for her, and we were excited for her.

Once we got back to my house I had to read the book to her at least eight times with the three of us, Avy, her mother and I reciting the chant.

To Sheila and Letty, and to all teachers, thank you for bringing the wonder of reading to children.

A HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW

WITH LETTY & SHEILA SUSTRIN

by John Sherin

Letty and Sheila Sustrin participated in **ROBS'** History Project of personal interviews on video. They were among the first to do so.

We learned from that interview that Sheila's initial came from her father's side of the family and Letty's from their mother's side. The twins, even at birth, showed a diplomatic nature.

The twins lived in Brooklyn and graduated from Brooklyn College coming to teach in Brentwood in 1960. They were interviewed by several administrators and principals and landed jobs at the Northwest Elementary School with Lou Lotito as principal.

After eighteen years at Northwest, the school closed. They went with Lou Lotito to the new Laurel Park School moving from Kindergarten to first grade. In 1978 Mr. Lotito nominated them as Teachers of the Year.

Even after all their years of teaching their main concern was each child. Their purpose was to make teaching fun every day. After retirement they did something they had never done before -- joining extra help groups for struggling students. Here they learned along with their students.

Letty said that Sheila was the more technical of the two. The exemplary leadership they enjoyed over the years was due to the quality of their fellow teachers and administrators like Lou Lotito and later Pat "Buster" Hudson.

The sisters retired after thirty-eight years in Brentwood. Or did they? They started writing a charming series of children's books on "The Teacher Who Would Not Retire". They were interviewed by newspapers (including the NY Times, Newsday) and television news, launching their books at bookstores, the Bolton Center in Bay Shore, and read their books at **ROBS** meetings.

Letty will be reading the latest book in the series, "the Teacher Who Wouldn't Retiree Loses Her Ballet Slippers" at the March 4, 2016 **ROBS** Meeting.

Sheila passed away in October of 2015 and is sorely missed. Her twin, Letty had continued her efforts in Project Hope's Holiday drive. Letty and her "elves" were able to provide three families (21 adults and children) with gifts through **ROBS'** generosity.

The Sustrin interview is January's featured History Project Interview on the **ROBS** website, **www.robsny.org.**

Sheila, doggie Belle, and Letty

ROBS ELECTION OF OFFICERS

COPY OF THE OFFICIAL BALLOT

May 6, 2016

PRESIDENT NICHOLAS SICILIANO		Nominations from the Floor	
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT KATHLEEN GULEKSEN			
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT HARRIET PEPINE			
SECRETARY NANCY CHURCHILLO			
TREASURER CARMEN ROLDAN			

SAMPLE

ELECTION

1. Written notice announcing the time and place of elections shall be mailed/emailed to each member in good standing at his/her last known address at least fifteen (15) days prior to the election.

2. A contested election shall be by secret ballot.

3. Only NYSUT members in good standing present at the election meeting may vote.

4. Each member shall be given reasonable opportunity to nominate candidates for office at the election meeting.

5. If no candidate receives a simple majority for his/her office, a runoff election of the two (2) candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be held.

TERMS OF OFFICE

1. Duly elected officers shall serve a two (2) year term commencing July 1st. Each officer shall remain in office until his/her successor assumes office.